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ABSTRACT

An internal evaluative feedback system used at a large multi-campus community college for presidential assessment is described. The purpose of the system is to provide for administrative development of the president; it does not involve presidential retention or dismissal. All those reporting directly to the president, including campus provosts, anonymously rate the performance of the president in the areas of leadership, planning and internal management, decision making, institutional representation, personnel, and personal qualities through the use of a rating scale. The president prepares a self-assessment, including summaries of his expectations and goals at the time of appointment, assessment of progress in meeting them, an analysis of his administrative style, a profile of major issues facing the institution, and statements of current goals and strategies for meeting them in the next evaluation cycle. The president reviews the ratings and develops summaries of the data results; he responds, pinpointing areas where improvement or clarification of purpose is needed, commenting on his self-assessment and outlining a set of clear, personal objectives. The completed documentation is used as the basis for dialogue between the president and his management team. A flow chart of the process and an extensive bibliography is included in the paper. (BB)

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TOWARD QUALITY ADMINISTRATION: PRESIDENTIAL ASSESSMENT AT NORTHERN VIRGINIA COMMUNITY COLLEGE AS A MEANS OF PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT FOR THE PRESIDENT

JC 780 246

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PREFACE

The evaluation and development of college and university administrators have become a significant issue in Higher Education. There is a growing evidence of interest throughout the United States in the more formal evaluation of college and university administrative leadership, and a broader acceptance of the need for their continued professional development. Now that the conscious level of Higher Education has been raised, it is essential to turn to the development of effective assessment programs, which have as their primary purpose, improved performance of college and university administrators.

Administrative evaluation, which includes the evaluation of the president of a college or university, is an extension of the interest and work that has been done in student evaluation (1960's), faculty evaluation (1970's), and overall institutional assessment. Evaluation of institutions and their managers is not a new phenomena. Informal evaluation, the day to day assessment of performance has always been done. The formalization of the process, within the context of written policy and well developed procedures, will stabilize the process, and make it more palatable and non-threatening to those being evaluated (Anderson, 1975).

Most of the work that has been done in the area of presidential evaluation concentrates on the evaluation of the chief administrative officer of the institution by the governing board or the Chancellor of a state system. The evaluator or decision maker is the final authority on the review process and has a major role in ensuring that the goals of the evaluation are met. The question of retention and dismissal is a major factor in the process, and can lead oftentimes to a negative attitude toward evaluation, and an unhealthy relationship between the president and his Board of Trustees.

If the primary purpose of an evaluation of the president is the identi-

fication through evaluative feedback, of performance areas which need improvement or development, and not his retention or dismissal, another model seems appropriate. A less threatening approach to presidential development, which can be very effective in stimulating the analysis and assessment of presidential performance, and encourage growth and development of the individual while in office, is an internal evaluative feedback system. This system would allow the top administrative staff to assess the performance of the president, to take stock of his present and potential strengths, and to comment, in a formalized and systematic way, on the success and direction of his stewardship. If properly developed and executed, this internal system can be as effective, if not a more effective tool than an evaluative system initiated by the Board of Trustees or the Chancellor. The strength of this model is in the formalization of the process, and the commitment of the President and his staff to consciously assess and collectively address problem areas in institutional leadership. In many ways, a formalized internal assessment and feedback system would be less threatening, and could result in better communication, a more open administrative operation, improved relations, and a better informed and more effective institutional leader. If an external evaluation system were to be instituted by the governing body of the institution, this internal system could easily be adapted to meet additional guidelines or criteria as developed by the Board of Trustees or the Chancellor. The internal evaluation would be a part of the President's "assessment portfolio."

The following model was developed for a large multi-campus community college. Along with the model is a rating scale to be used by the President's administrative team.* The scale provides an opportunity for the rater to

*Rating Scale may be obtained from the author, State University of New York at Buffalo, Department of Higher Education, Amherst, New York 14360.

assess the performance of the President in areas of leadership, planning and internal management, decision making, institutional representation, personnel, and personal qualities. The instrument also provides an opportunity for the administrative team to write narrative feedback. This is a formalized internal evaluative feedback system, which is used by the President and his administrative staff to address the problems of institutional leadership.

Whatever assessment model is used in a presidential evaluation, the process should be growth oriented, directed toward enhancing competencies, and not to rid an institution of its president. There must be mutual faith that the two groups (the evaluators and the evaluatee) are working toward the same goal - improved presidential performance, for the benefit of the president as well as the enhancement of the college administrative operation. As Genova, et al., (1976) states, "Mutual benefit is not, however, an automatic outcome of . . . administrator evaluation, but rather the result of careful and guided planning by all of the constituencies involved." If a mutual trust is not developed, the assessment of the president will fail, no matter how sensitively structured the evaluative instrument, or skillfully administered the program. In addition, there must be an agreement among the participants that the results of the review will be taken seriously, and that once identified, areas of performance weakness will be addressed. If this is not interwoven into the fabric of the assessment process, there can be little hope of success. As Munitz (1976) suggests, there is a real danger in driving our finest people away by crude assessment devices. The challenge is to create a process which will identify weakness as well as strengths, and strengthen the person in office.

A MODEL FOR PRESIDENTIAL ASSESSMENT

The performance of the president of a large multi-campus community college, such as Northern Virginia Community College, is crucial to the success and vitality of the institution. The president, as the chief executive officer, provides almost singlehandedly the solidarity necessary for such a multi-dimensional administrative structure to operate smoothly and in congruence with the College mission and goals. The conflict of interests among the campuses and individuals, and the competition for resources and recognition, require strong leadership on the part of the chief executive officer. This matrix of forces within which the president must work necessitates a clear understanding of the role of the presidency, an awareness of the impact of the presidency upon the College, as well as each component within the College, and a cognizance of the organizational climate and health of the institution. An on-going review of presidential performance can provide feedback to the president on how well it is thought he is doing, and valuable information which the president might use in developing strategies for his personal and professional development.

The purpose of presidential assessment at Northern Virginia Community College is three-fold. It is: 1) administrative development of the President; 2) better understanding of the President's management style; and, 3) a more open atmosphere which would encourage more meaningful interaction and support among the members of the President's administrative team.

After several years of rapid growth in enrollments, Northern Virginia Community College is entering a new stage of development. Concern for enrollment stability, fiscal constraints, and increased demand for accountability from the State, have encouraged a more intense examination of policies and procedures operative within the College. Presidential assessment, as a part of a comprehensive administrative and professional development process, seems most appropriate.

There exists at Northern Virginia Community College a good institutional climate, along with an effective President who appears to have the support of his faculty and staff. The best time to institute an assessment program is when a successful administrator occupies the position. Not only can he/she suggest criteria upon which an evaluative instrument can be based, but the prevailing climate at the College should encourage a non-threatened response from the President.

Northern Virginia Community College has in existence administrative evaluation by the President of his top administrative staff. Traditionally, evaluation at the College has been a downward process, with its inception at the lower end of the hierarchy. Faculty evaluate students, and administrators evaluate faculty. Assessment of the President by those who report to him would make more credible, throughout the College, evaluation as a means of improving job performance and would demonstrate the value of peer and subordinate review in professional and personal development.

Finally, once the process is completed, assessment of the President would provide the ground-level work upon which the College might develop a comprehensive executive management policy, which would be useful in future selection and evaluation procedures.

Presidential assessment, as presented in this model, will provide the President and his top administrative staff an opportunity to reflect upon the administrative operation of the College, to share perceptions of the presidency, and to make suggestions to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of the administrative team. As a part of a comprehensive evaluation system, presidential assessment is the apex, and can provide leadership and foster a positive attitude toward performance analysis and appraisal throughout the College.

Central to this assessment model is the concept, as developed by French

and Bell (1973), "of improvement of an organization's problem solving and renewal processes, through a more effective and collaborative management of organizational culture." This concept of collaborative management rests clearly on the assumption that it is possible for the people within the organization to direct the "prevailing background of fabric of prescriptions and proscriptions for behavior, in such a way that the goals and objectives of the institution are attained (i.e., effective leadership), at the same time that personal values of the individuals within the organization are furthered (i.e., personal growth and development)." Such utilization of the resources within the institution, to formally assess the leadership needs of the institution, and to provide mandates for change, as well as take stock of present and potential strenghts, can be extremely difficult but rewarding to those individuals directly involved in the assessment process, as well as beneficial to the institution at large. Assessment of the performance of the president by his top administrative staff, along with a review of the president's success in achieving previously agreed upon institutional goals and objectives, can also provide valuable information and a framework upon which a fair presidential evaluation can be based.

This model for presidential assessment has been developed in response to the particular governance structure of the Virginia Community College System. As a part of the 23 member Virginia Community College System, Northern Virginia Community College is governed by the State Board of Community Colleges. The chief administrative officer, that is, the President of the College, is appointed by the State Board of Community Colleges. The President is responsible to the State Board for Community Colleges, through the Chancellor of the Virginia Community College System, for the operation of the community college. Any formal evaluation of the President, therefore, must be done by the State Board for

Community Colleges or its designee, the Chancellor of the Virginia Community College System.

Unlike other evaluation systems which have been developed around the country for use by external governing bodies, this internal feedback mechanism does not involve the question of retention or dismissal. It has as its primary purpose the identification of presidential performance areas which need improvement, and the creation of a two-way communication between the President and his administrative staff in the analysis of administrative performance. The focus is on professional development for the President. This kind of collaborative effort should encourage both the President and his staff to honestly, and more objectively, review the leadership needs of the College, to assess the performance of its chief executive officer, and to suggest ways in which the President might improve his leadership and administrative style in order to optimize his effectiveness as institutional leader.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The literature on formal presidential evaluation is growing. Charles Fisher (1977) detailed much of the effort that has been made in the last year in Higher Education to address the deficiencies in administrative evaluation and development.

Much of the work and the case studies available deal with the university presidency. Cohen and March (1974), in what has become a classic on the academic presidency, refer specifically to the university presidency, although they suggest that much of the same criteria for a successful presidency and the ambiguities of the office are applicable to the community college president.

There is a void in the literature on the assessment of community college presidents. One reason is that there is little formal assessment of presidential performance, or formal evaluation of community college presidents being done (Farmer, 1977). The absence of work in this area might also be explained in part by the feeling of many people, including two year college presidents, that the role and responsibilities of the president in Higher Education are similar, with the biggest difference being in public vs. private and large vs. small institutions (O'Connell, 1968; Harvey, 1977).

Foresi (1974) takes exception to this. He states that the president of a community college differs from the four year institution and university president in that the missions of the institutions are different. The sensitivity to the community and the willingness of the community college to adapt to new programs, alternative instructional approaches, and new clientele, mandates a unique agenda. "The two year college presidency cannot be directly compared with other chief administrative positions in either the university or the common school district." (Morgan, 1968)

On the other hand, two year institutions, particularly the large comprehensive community colleges, have come to have much in common with senior institutions. As two year institutions became more comprehensive, and as articulation between these institutions and the four year institutions and universities has been furthered, two year institutions have become a more recognized component of Higher Education. With increased support from states and counties for community colleges, the call for standardization of accountability procedures from state legislatures, and the fiscal austerity which has plagued most state-supported institutions, the two year institution president resembles, in many ways, his four year and university counterpart. Concomitantly, the four year institutions have expanded their traditional mission of community service beyond the commitment to research and development. In part, because of the success of community colleges in identifying and tapping the resources within the community, the walls of the ivory tower are slowly being scaled, and torn down.

The foundation of any presidential assessment study must be grounded in an understanding of the role of the college president. Much of the work on community college presidents before 1968 was autobiographical and anecdotal, rather than scientific (Shannon, 1962). The literature of the late 60's provides detailed descriptions of the new roles and responsibilities of junior and community college presidents. The works of Rouche (1968) and others (Cohen, 1969, Morgan, 1968) are geared toward developing energetic and successful academic leaders for the emerging community colleges. To a very large extent, that role of the new president in a new college has changed, and there is need for continued study of the community college presidency (Rushing, 1976, Gilli, 1976).

As the role and responsibilities of presidents have changed in the last few decades, so have the criteria for a successful presidency. In the 50's, the

college president had to be a scholar (Dodds, 1962), in the 60's, his success was often determined by his ability to mediate and conciliate conflicting campus groups and students. The 70's have heightened the importance of management skills as one of the most important criteria for a successful presidency. Certainly the president of a multi-campus institution like Northern Virginia Community College must possess good management skills. The literature on Higher Education management which takes an interdisciplinary approach, along with case studies from business and industry, and adapts its theories and practices to two and four year college and university management systems, is growing (see Harvey's Managing Colleges and Universities, 1976), and is very helpful in the understanding of the role and responsibilities of present-day college presidents and in the development of appropriate evaluation procedures.

I. ASSESSMENT OF PRESIDENTIAL PERFORMANCE BY THE ADMINISTRATIVE TEAM

The Northern Virginia Community College Presidential Assessment is designed to be administered to the persons who report directly to the President. Each member of the Administrative Council, the Director of the Extended Learning Institute, and the Assistant to the President for Public Relations, both of whom sit with the Administrative Council, are provided with an assessment form, which includes a rating scale, and an opportunity to provide narrative feedback on the President's performance. The responses are tabulated and reported as group data. All narrative feedback is typed to protect confidentiality.

Participants include the following:

1) Provost of the Alexandria Campus;
2) Provost of the Annandale Campus;
3) Provost of the Loudoun Campus;
4) Provost of the Manassas Campus;
5) Provost of the Woodbridge Campus;
6) Dean of Financial and Administrative Services;
7) Dean for Instructional Services;
8) Dean for Student Services;

and

9) Director of the Extended Learning Institute;
10) Assistant to the President for Public Relations;

and

11) President of the College.

II. PREPARATION OF SELF-ASSESSMENT STATEMENT

The President prepares a self-assessment of his performance. Included would be the following elements:

1) a summary of expectation or goals at the time of his appointment to the presidency, and the modification of those goals during his tenure;
2) an assessment of the degree to which the President feels he has been successful in reaching those goals;
3) an analysis of his administrative style;
4) a profile of the major issues confronting the administration of the institution and the improvements that could be made which would address those issues in the most effective and efficient manner;
5) statements of administrative goals and expectations, along with strategies the President proposes to achieve these goals during the next year or evaluation cycle.

Once the self-assessment has been prepared, and the ratings have been collected from the Administrative Council, the President may choose to share his self-assessment with them. The primary purpose of the self-assessment is the "introspective assessment of personal goals, and greater self-knowledge" (Fretwell, 1977). Sharing those thoughts with the management team can produce a greater understanding of the president, his or her personal philosophy, management style, and direction.

III. COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS OF THE DATA

The data from the assessment form is collected by the Office of the President, or a designee of the President. To assure anonymity, all narrative feedback is typed.

Upon receipt of the ratings from members of the Administrative Council, the President reviews the data and develops summaries of the data results, to which he will respond. The number of assessments in this model is small, and the President may choose to review them independently. Assistance in the analysis of the data could be sought from persons within the College, or an outside consultant. As a facilitator and a buffer between the providers of assessment feedback and the person being assessed, a consultant can provide assistance in interpreting the results of the ratings, identifying problem areas, and addressing positively areas of concern or areas where there were lower ratings.

If an outside person is not used, the President will prepare a response to the evaluative feedback, pinpointing those performance areas where the ratings indicate a need for improvement or clarification of purpose. Included in this response will be a commentary on his self-assessment, along with a set of clear, personal objectives, to which the President will address himself in the following year. These objectives can be the basis for evaluating the professional growth and development of the President in a future assessment, and can serve as one element in a comprehensive evaluation of the President.

IV. USE OF RESULTS

The entire assessment process, the presidential self-assessment, the ratings by the Administrative Council, and the accompanying narratives should be used as the basis for a dialogue between the President and his management team. As a group, they can respond to the assessment results, and collectively suggest strategies or plans of action which will further enhance the management capability of the President, and thereby the effectiveness of the administrative team.

Out of the President's response to the assessment, and the subsequent dialogue, should come clear objectives against which progress in his professional development can be measured the following year. It is the responsibility of the President to address those performance areas where there appears to be some weakness, and the administrative team can provide support to him/her, by sharing in the formulating of performance objectives, and by consciously assessing the President's success in their attainment. (See Harvey's Managing Colleges and Universities by Objectives).

NORTHERN VIRGINIA COMMUNITY COLLEGE PRESIDENTIAL ASSESSMENT
PROGRAM PHASES AND ACTIVITIES

PHASE I

INTRODUCTION

- Distribution of Working Paper on Presidential Evaluation to Administrative Council → Discussion
- Assess Institutional Commitment and Readiness → Program Participation Decision

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PHASE II

PERFORMANCE ASSESSMENT

- Review of Assessment Criteria and Assessment Model
- Planning of Assessment Activities
- Self-Assessment by the President
- Collect descriptive data → Analyze performance assessment information
- Feedback results to the President

PHASE III

DIAGNOSIS AND TREATMENT

- Consider weak performance areas
- Consider President's current management and leadership capabilities
- Decide on Intervention Mode for:
  1. improving management practices
  2. professional development
  3. personal development
- Develop Professional Development and Training Objectives
- Consider Institutional Support

EVALUATION

- Current Year → Evaluate Presidential Assessment Program
  Make Recommendations for Revision in Substance and Format for Next Year
- Next Year → Evaluate President Against Previously Agreed Upon Professional Development Objectives

Evaluate Presidential Assessment Program

NORTHERN VIRGINIA COMMUNITY COLLEGE PRESIDENTIAL ASSESSMENT

TIME TABLE

I. INITIAL MEETING WITH THE PRESIDENT (EVALUATEE) AND THE ADMINISTRATIVE COUNCIL (EVALUATORS)

1. Open discussion on the pros and cons of presidential assessment and the implications of such a process for Northern Virginia Community College.

2. Distribution of the "Working Paper on Presidential Evaluation" and "Model for Presidential Assessment at Northern Virginia Community College," excluding the evaluative instrument.

II. MEETING WITH THE PRESIDENT AND THE ADMINISTRATIVE COUNCIL

1. Based on the papers presented to the Administrative Council and subsequent discussion among the members of the Administrative Council with the President, a decision must be made to institute a Presidential Assessment at Northern Virginia Community College.

2. Presentation of the Model for Presidential Assessment at Northern Virginia Community College, including a description of the rating scale, but not a copy. Options to the Model should also be presented.

3. Decisions on the following questions must be made:

   a. anonymity;
   b. use of an outside consultant;
   c. criteria to be used to assess the President's performance;
   d. model to be used;
   e. revision of the evaluative instrument;
   f. time table

III. Preparation of the Presidential Self-Assessment.

IV. Distribution of the Evaluative Feedback Mechanism to the members of the Administrative Council, the Director of the Extended Learning Institute, and the Assistant to the President for Public Relations.

V. Collection of the data and Analysis.

VI. Distribution of the Presidential Self-Assessment to the members of the Administrative Council, the Director of the Extended Learning Institute, and the Assistant to the President for Public Relations.

VII. MEETING WITH THE PRESIDENT AND THE ADMINISTRATIVE COUNCIL

1. Presidential Statement which will comment on the feedback the President received in the assessment of his performance, address his self-assessment, and, finally, provide some very clear personal goals and objectives he has outlined for the following evaluative cycle.

2. Evaluation of the Assessment Procedure:

   a. Administrative Council would outline suggestions for improving the assessment process, both in substance and format.

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